

VZCZCXRO8927
PP RUEHAG RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHNEH RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHSL
RUEHSR
DE RUEHAH #1130 2471303
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 041303Z SEP 09
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3416
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5631
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3350
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3214
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3874
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3869

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 001130

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/04/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [TX](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: UZBEKISTAN TRYING TO BROADEN
RELATIONS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Sylvia Reed Curran. Reasons 1.4 (B) a
nd (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Uzbekistan is making every effort to expand its relations with Turkmenistan, both politically and commercially. They are looking for new opportunities for investment and trying to promote tourism to Uzbekistan. Despite their efforts, and the cultural ties between Uzbeks and Turkmen, Turkmenistan has not relaxed the visa regime or allowed ethnic Uzbeks to form cultural organizations. It continues to be wary of any foreigners, including its closest neighbors. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Uzbekistan Embassy Counselor, Ilyos Makhamadaliev, explained to Poloff that, despite cultural and linguistic similarities between Uzbeks and Turkmen, government relations have only warmed up since 2007, when Berdimuhamedov became president. Uzbek President Karimov and Berdimuhamedov respect each other, have made multiple trips to each other's countries in the past two years, and are setting the tone for broader relations between the two countries. The next potential meeting would be in December -- Turkmenistan has invited Karimov to attend the opening ceremony for the Chinese National Petroleum Company gas pipeline that will start in Turkmenistan, cross through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and end in China.

¶3. (C) Makhamadaliev opined that Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have many common interests, and so were ideal partners. He mentioned, in particular, that Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan share common views on solutions to the water problems in Central Asia. When asked whether the similarities in their exports -- natural gas and cotton -- caused the countries to compete instead of cooperate, Makhamadaliev denied that there was any competition between the countries. He added that Uzbekistan is looking for investment opportunities in Turkmenistan and is currently looking into building hotels in the Avaza tourist zone, building factories that produce Uzbek cars in border regions including Lebap province, and increasing trade in the agricultural sector, for example selling farm machinery. He noted, however, that there was little or no cooperation in the energy and textile sectors.

¶4. (SBU) Makhamadaliev emphasized the cultural ties between

Uzbeks and Turkmen, highlighting that many ethnic Uzbeks live in Dashoguz and Lebap provinces, which border Uzbekistan. In fact, Uzbekistan is trying to promote tourism, encouraging Turkmen to visit Samarkand and Bukhara and other ancient sites. Makhamadaliev explained that the campaign's message is that the tourist sites in Uzbekistan are part of a joint heritage shared by Turkmen and Uzbeks.

15. (SBU) Despite the increasing closeness, Turkmen still need visas to travel to Uzbekistan and vice versa. There is only one flight per week between Ashgabat and Tashkent. In addition, there are no Uzbek cultural organizations in Turkmenistan, even though there are six Turkmen ones in Uzbekistan.

16. (C) COMMENT: Uzbekistan is clearly trying to increase its involvement in Turkmenistan, now that the cordial relations between the two countries' presidents have given them the opportunity. What is not so clear is how receptive the Turkmen are to these overtures. END COMMENT.
CURRAN